## WEB9 ST

CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY J



## BERTRAM MEADE FACES ANOTHER GREAT CRISIS AND APPARENTLY DESERTS HIS SUPERIOR AT THE CRITICAL PERIOD

Following the collapse of an international bridge which his father, a noted engineer, had planned, and the old man's sudden death from disgrace and shock, Bertram Meade takes the blame for the disaster which cost many lives and disappears from his home in New York. He goes to the southwest, gets a job under the name of Roberts on an irrigation dam project and makes good. Meanwhile, Helen Illingworth, Meade's sweetheart, and Rodney, an old friend, are quietly working to clear the young man's name and learn his whereabouts, They are particularly anxious to get hold of a letter written by the elder Meade to assume responsibility for the accident. This paper is secretly held by Shurtliff, who had been the old man's devoted private secretary for many years. This installment opens with the threat of disaster to the dam through flooding by cloudburst.

CHAPTER XIV .- Continued.

The lantern was standing on the uncompleted spillway, and that Foadway on top of the dam. A man | wouldn't be enough to discharge it at was kneeling beyond it, his figure seen | the rate it's been coming in." dimly in the faint light of the lantern. He was staring intently down the thoughtfully. "And if the dam goes," with a shock of horror how much more a thing left of the camp, the town, the rapid the rise had been. A quick esti- new railroad bridge, or anything else." mate convinced him that the level of the water was now within eight or nine ing!

The face of the kneeling man was hidden by a sou'wester and he had on a heavy black rubber raincoat. Van-deventer reached over and touched | lzed his slip, so he did not observe the him on the shoulder.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

The kneeling man sprang up with an exclamation. It was Meade. The re-Hef in Vandeventer's mind was great at the recognition.

"I just came out to look at the waounding on the fron roof of the quarters, so I dressed and came out."

Vandeventer opened the slide of his own lantern and threw the light on the reservoir.

"It's risen eight or ten feet since we saw it, and with this rain-"

"It's not coming down so hard as it was when I first came out here," id Meade. "I think you can see I Mackening yourself."

"Yes," said the resident engineer, astening a moment, "I believe it is. If It stops now," he continued thoughtfully, "we ought to be safe."

"Yes, I think so," answered Meade. In the night alone, together in that orisis in their fortunes, the two men were interchanging thoughts and ideas on terms of perfect equality. It did not occur to Vandeventer to question aroused no surprise in the mind of deade.

"Of course," continued Meade, "even if it does stop raining we'll continue to get a lot of runoff from the watershed for some time."

"Yes," said the resident engineer, "that of course, but if the rain stops everywhere we can scarcely have a that would still be a little below the spillway."

Meade, and, indeed, the force of the downpour was greatly diminished.

The two stood watching the dam and the black lake beyond it in silence for ly ceased. The air was misty and heavy with moisture, but the rain was certainly over for the time at any rate.

"Thank goodness," said the resident angineer in great relief. "Now if it's suggest anything more?" stopped everywhere we'll be all right."

"Yes," said Meade, "and I'm inclined to think it has stopped everywhere. Whoever thought it would rain in Janhary here? There hasn't a drop, to speak of, fallen in January for twenty years, or since there have been any records. Why in heaven's name it had to come now I don't see."

"Look here, Roberts," said Vandeventer suddenly, "you know you're a first-class engineer.

Mende shook his head. "You can't fool me," said the older man. "I've watched you. You know more about the game than anybody here except myself. You don't choose to confide in me, although I like you, and I am in a position to help you."

"I appreciate what you say, Mr. Vandeventer," returned the other; "there can't-not yet.'

Well, keep your own counsel, but if you ever want a friend, count on me ; neanwhile, as a man of experience and ability, what would you do?"

more work." "But the rain has stopped."

the water were as high as the top

there'd only be two feet of head in the

"Of course," said Vandeventer front of the dam at the water. The he added, "there are ten miles of back lantern was near the edge and it faint- water up there and millions of cubic ly illuminated the black, ram-lashed yards impounded, which would sweep surface below. Vandeventer realized down the valley. There wouldn't be

"Coming on top of the International, the loss of this big and expensive viafeet of the dam-and it was still rain- duct would about finish the Martlet company," said Meade thoughtlessly.

Vandeventer looked at him sharply. An idea suddenly came to him. Meade light in Vandeventer's eyes. However, the resident engineer was a good sort.

"You are right," he said quickly. "I hate to call out the men, but we've got a little chance, now the rain has stopped, and we can work to advantage in spite of all this awful mud"—he lifted his foot up and disclosed it caked ter. I couldn't sleep with all that and clogged with masses. "I'll take charge in the center here, and Stafford on the left, and I'm going to give you charge of the east end of the dam, over by the spillway. If only those drills had been here six weeks ago."

"We might set the men to work on that rock now," said Meade.

much of it. No, if we're going to save back in the town. Some of the Italto build it up and can build it the greater will be the head on the spillway, and the more chances of this palisade of ours?" will be discharged. I'll turn the men

"But what are you going to do?" "I'm going to palisade the top of the dam. There's plenty of timber already cut down, and we will cut a lot of young pines and build a palisade wall why, and that they were doing so of timber across the top three or four feet back from the edge. Well banked

on the downstream side, it may hold." "It might be worth while to line that palisade with galvanized iron sheets from the houses," said Meade.

"A good idea," said Vandeventer, "and we'll pile what underbrush and small stuff we have in front of the palisade and heap what rocks we can rise of more than five or six feet, and find on top of that, and we'll bank it up on the other side with earth. It's a the hand of God. There was no more poor dependence, but it will hold for a "It's stopping here now," pointed out while anyway, and every moment of was chop and hew, break and pound, time may be precious."

"How about sandbags, sir?" "We've got a few hundred cement bags, but not enough. I wish we had a few moments until the rain practical- a few thousand; however, we will fill what we have, and if the water rises and begins to trickle over the top and through the palisade, we'll jam those down at the danger points. Can you

"Nothing." "Good. We'll turn out the men. They've had six hours' sleep anyway."

CHAPTER XV.

The Battle.

It was now three o'clock in the morning. In about half an hour the men, naturally grumbling and protesting at being deprived of any of their sleep, were out and at work. Lanterns were lighted everywhere. The rain had fortunately not resumed, and the air was soon filled with noise and confusion. Men with axes were busy on the hillside cutting the young pines. Horses were hitched to the dump wagons, the steam shovel began tearing away the hillside. Some of the men were detailed to knock down some is no one to whom I should rather tell of the galvanized iron houses and the the whole story than to you, but I battering of the hammers on the metal added to the din.

Under Vandeventer's personal direction a row of stakes was driven into other laborer, and the rest of the the top of the dam about three feet from the front of it. Big sheets of "Get out the men and build up a overlapping galvanized iron were temporary dam on the top of the road- nailed roughly to the fronts of the way here, to turn the flow over to the firmly bedded stakes and the small tain. It was headed for the valley. wast bank and make the spillway do branches and brushwood were thrown Vandeventer saw it, every teamster, down before it. Bowlders and big every common laborer saw it. It was stones were carried out on the dam in "And in all probability will stay the wagons and thrown down on the fered there would be more rain, They topped-still you never can tell. A brushwood; spare timbers, broken had worked desperately before, but

palisade; a bank of earth was piled them. They would not be beaten. They up behind it, on which every man who cried, at first shrilly and then hoarsely could be spared from other tasks, even and raucously, encouraging words and the chiefs themselves, labored with phrases from one to another; in words breathless energy. The water was still vivid, profane, desperate. They stood rising, although the rain had stopped; there and they heaved and dug and the natural drainage would cause that, piled and hammered and hurled and succession of them. The rain constant- go with a rush. but the rise was slower.

At dawn Vandeventer personally water and gauged it again. It was a was not unlike a battle in other ways, scant six and a half feet below the top for with the rush of the northwest the top it was gravely questionable and vivid and terrifying lightning. It all, yet there was no other way of in- were hurled by some gigantic hand becreasing the depth of the spillway enough to discharge the flood volume.

Working as hard as they could, they had barely succeeded in raising the earth bank back of it a foot high. They kept at it unremittingly, although it did not seem to be of much use. Vandeventer, Stafford and Meade gathered together and scanned the sky, seeking to discern the signs of the time, the purpose of the heavens. It was clearer in the east. The clouds to the northwestward were in violent action apparently. Lightning flashed through them and over the great range itself; low, muttered peals of thunder came down from the peaks lost to sight . in the blackness overhead. They observed all this carefully and Vandeventer turned away, shaking his head.

"I don't know," he began-the three of them were over on the east side the better to see up the valley-"it looks pretty bad, doesn't it?"

"It does," answered Meade, while Stafford nodded his head. "And, by the way, Stafford, have you

notified the town and the bridge people of the danger and bid them prepare for it?"

"I tried to telephone them a while ago, but the connection has been broken; the storm has played havoc with the line probably," answered the as sistant engineer.

"Well, what did you do then?" asked Vandeventer a little impatiently.

"I sent a man down on horseback in hurry to warn them that if it rains again the dam might go, and if it did it would go with a rush; that the water was now only six feet below the level, and that they had better get up on the hills. Of course, last night's rain must o'clock. I told him to tell the Martlet people to take whatever steps they could devise to hold their viaduct and as he turned and walked toward his own part of the dam.

"Good," exclaimed Vandeventer. There's nothing left for us to do but keep on."

The resident engineer looked white and haggard. Although it was cold and raw in the wet air, he wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"The men are doing splendidly, sir," said Meade.

"Yes," said Vandeventer, "many of "It would be useless. There's too them have their wives and children ians have bought land on the prairie try to keep ahead of the waters if and are going to settle here. They're they rise any more. The higher we fighting for everything they've got on earth. What do you think of the

Meade shook his head. "It's all we can do, sir, but if the water rises more than seven or eight feet-

"Say it," said Vandeventer. "The dam would go like a house of cards."

"Exactly. And look at that cloudbank over there in the northwest. It's spreading."

"What wind there is," said Meade, moistening his finger and holding it up to feel the direction, "is blowing the opposite way down here, but you can't tell what is happening up there. Well, all we can do is to fight on."

And fight they did. It was almost at first sight like the hand of man against room for engineering expedient. It



A Man Was Kneeling Beyond It.

dig and drive, carry and pile. Throwing off his coat, Vandeventer seized a spade and began to work like any higher men followed his example.

At six o'clock the blackness hanging in the northwest began to turn their way. It was coming down the mouncoming. Unless heaven itself intermore hours of rain like that we've | wagon beds, old wheels, joists of dis- now they applied themselves to their

drove flercely. It was a battle mad- ly seemed to increase as the wind ness that came into them. They saw



-And Shook His Fist at the Sky.

hind the black screen of sweeping cloud down upon the granite mountains. They saw splinters of fire where the thunderbolts struck. The pealing of thunder was appalling.

Their frail palisade backing was not half completed. It must be raining somewhere, for the water was still slowly rising. It was five and a half feet now from the crest. It was hopeless if another rain fell, and the rain was coming. There was an added chill have made the road almost impassable, in the still air of the valley as the but he ought to get there by nine storm drove down upon them. A few of the fainter hearts flung down pick and shovel and ax and stood craven. Oaths, curses, blows even, from those their machinery," answered Stafford, of the braver sort shamed them into work again. These brave hearts and true might be swept away with the dam if it gave way, but they would not give up, and no man working with them should flee his task or shirk his duty. By the living God, whose sport and plaything they seemed to be, they swore it; and so weak and strong, bold and timid labored on-desperate, resolved, godlike in their courage and persistence.

The clouds were moving swiftly now. To the east it had been clear, but now it was also black, and then with a roar greater a thousand thunderclaps, the wind tore down the mountains, through the narrow canyons, into the valleys, shricking in the pines, and fell upon them and hurled them down and brushed them back. And after the wind, the rain. A drop or two struck Vandeventer's cheek; another, another, and then the flood. He lifted his head and stared and shook his fist at the sky and turned to the human termites he commanded.

"Carry on, carry on, boys," he cried, shricking to be heard above the thunder peals, "we'll beat it yet."

A cheer rose about him and was caught up and ran along the top of the great dam. The half-maniacal yell was such a cry as men might give vent to in the heat of battle, the excitement of wild charge, and then they fell to it again. The more ignorant, unaware of the feebleness of the pallsade, the more knowing indifferent to it, seeing only the job, alike realized only their duty to fight on, to answer the appeal to their manhood, to refuse to admit defeat even when life trembled in the balance.

Yes, to use the ancient simile again, the fountains of the great deep were broken open. What had befallen them before was nothing to this. The hard rain of the night seemed trifling compared to this avalanche of water. This was a cloudburst indeed. And to make it worse, to make their task harder, to render their efforts useless. the high wind roaring down the valley piled the water up and drove it in thunderous assaulting waves against the great mound of earth on which the men struggled and labored frantically,

Vandeventer, shovel in hand-he did not dare to throw it down, lest his action be misconstrued-went from gang to gang, from man to man, talking to them, appealing to them, pointing out weaknesses here and there, inspiring them, holding them up as a man might hold a stricken line against the onslaught of a victorious and overwhelming force. And against wind and rain in that thick darkness, blinded by the flashing lightning, stunned by the pealing thunder, with zeal superhuman they tolled on and on and on.

Back and forth went the chief, showing himself a leader of leaders, and wherever he stopped the fury and desperation of the effort to stem the tide increased. When he came plodding along the muddy roadway to the part committed to Meade he did not find the engineer.

"Where's Roberts?" he yelled above the noise of the storm.

"He and two men have gone, sir." had and the whole thing would go. If membered houses were driven into the tasks with a kind of wild fury. A and that he had neither breath nor dred and fifty caught the contagion

earth to serve as braces behind the sort of insanity took possession of time to waste, "there's more need for and threw themselves against the pallthe rest of us to take their places."

and the half-finished spillway comwork !"

gate for the canal had been intended | bodies for the keen wind that blew to pass the smaller floods which might across them. occur during the construction and had been open since the rain began. It could. Vandeventer jumped down and carried off a great volume of water, pressed himself against the nearest but hopelessly little in comparison with timber with the men and waited, silent. the flood. Foot by foot in the torren- He had never sustained such a prestial downpour the water rose. At half sure in all his life. Like Atlas, he after eight it reached the level of the felt as if he were holding up a world. spillway and commenced to rush And the mocking thing about it all through in ever-increasing volume, but the flow into the reservoir was far that he was not really holding anygreater than the spillway's capacity.

Still the sight of the rushing water discharge would be increased enough gods, to stop the rise, but at present the effect was small. By nine o'clock it was within a foot of the top. They began to measure its rise by inches. Although the dam had been carefully kept level as it was built, the trample of horses and men, the present digging and palisading and revetting had caused little depressions. Now the water rose to the level. Here and there it began to trickle over!

The rain coming down from the mountain tops was as cold as ice, yet the men were in a fever of excitement. They had got their second wind. They were too enthused, too desperate, to feel their weariness. They had not worked before as they did then. It was the last possible nervous outburst with most of them. They could keep it up a little longer-till they dropped dead. As the mad thoroughbred falls in his stride on the track, pushed beyond his power of endurance, as even the common carthorse can be made to go until he drops, so these men, white, haggard, nervous, drawn-faced, sweat mingling with the rain on their sodden bodies, would go till they broke. They had not quite reached that point yet.

There were some five hundred heavy cement bags which had been filled with sand and piled up on the roadway at convenient points. As a forlorn hope as a last try, Vandeventer called all the diggers and ditchers, and hewers and drivers, and bade them tackle the sandbags. The timber wall that rose to four or five feet was now packed to a height of three with an unequal wall of earth.

The waves were beginning to roll against the rampart, although their force as yet was broken by the brushwood. Vandeventer jumped up on the palisade near the center. There were some large logs there where he could stand, and whence he could get as clear a view of the whole top of the dam as was possible through the driving rain.

"There," shouted the engineer, pointing to a red trickle—it seemed to him like blood, taking its hideous hue from the red clay of the banks-where the water had found a low spot and was washing across the top and trickling through the new wall and down on the other side. Even as he pointed, the trickle became a stream and the stream bade fair to be a flood. Men ran and dropped sandbags over in front of the palisade, right where the leak had occurred. Other men heaped up the earth behind the wall, seeking to smother it and stop it. The water checked there, they were forced to do the same thing at another place. Desperately they dropped their sandbags, sturdily they plied their shovels in the mud; scrambling and yelling, they ran from leak to leak. They lifted the heavy bags of sand as if they had been loaves of bread and jammed them down. They swung pick and argument; the argument that Helen shovel like toys, although the rain made all the earth sticky mud and to her father. It was that to which she the work all the harder. The water was clear over the top of the dam now, and streaming through the revetment of brush and surging against the pallsade. Where it did not let the water daily thought and conversation any through, the line of stakes was beginning to bend backward.

sandbags and could get no more, in anything absolutely from the human one final effort ran to the palisade, dug their heels madly in the wet, slimy rheumatism - doing certain things earth and put their shoulders against without thinking of the disease sought the bending stakes as if to hold them up by main strength. Thin streams were flowing here and there, now unheeded. Checked and held in one spot, the water broke through at another. The spillway could not control the rise.

"She's gone, she's gone!" gasped Vandeventer under his breath. He had fought a good fight. He could do no more. There were no more bags of sand. Save for the men straining at "Gone?" cried Vandeventer, cut to the wall here and there and everythe heart at what he thought was a where, there was left nothing but to desertion. "Well," he shouted, realiz- stand and wait, having done all. As ing there was nothing he could do then one man saw another the whole hun-

sade, wet and chilled from the rain, He drew a man or two from the but yet madly, recklessly, Americans other gangs to re-enforce this danger and foreigners alike. They would hold point and himself directed their work. It by main strength for another min-Now it takes time for water to rise ute, they swore, oblivious to the fact five feet, even in a cloudburst or a that just as soon as it went it would

The stockade would be swept away drove it on. Vandeventer knew that first, and they would go with it. What carefully measured the depth of the red like the berserker of old. Yes, it the dam was doomed, that the sluice of that? The men back of it matched their brawny arms against rain and bined could discharge only a small part | wind, the powers of man against the of the dam. If the water rose above storm came roaring mighty thunder of the flow, but he knew that he would powers of God, but not mockingly. It have two hours at least to work be- is perhaps doubtful if they realized whether the pallsade would hold it at was as if great darts of light literally fore the water could pass the crest, what they did. It was instinct, habit, undermine, and batter down the pall- blind desperation now. If the flimsy side and begin to trickle over. Just wall failed under the terrific water as soon as it did roll over the top, pressure, they would be hurled beneath unless they could stop it, the whole it, swept down the slope of the dam, thing was gone. For those two hours buried in the debris as it was swept the supermen labored unremittingly in away, caught up if they by any chance the downpour with a persistent and he- survived so far, and hurled, broken and roic courage that should have been re- battered, down the valley in the tercorded in song and story but which rible flood that would ensue. What was not. It was remembered after did they know about that, or knowing, a while by none save a few. To the what did they care, as they strained many it was only "all in the day's at the wavering timber wall? And still they held as the rain poured down The undersluice in the side of the on them, soaking through their soggy dam which would later serve as head- clothes, the colder on their exhausted

Well, they had done everything they was his feeling, nay his realization, thing, that if the pallsades falled, his pressure, his resistance and that of all encouraged the men. Every one of the other men amounted to nothing. them felt that if the pallsade held the Yet he held on, and they, too-demi-

CHAPTER XVI.

The Ancient Art of Fascination. And much of the last wild hurricane of work took place under the observation of a woman!

From the top of the big mesa there was a clear view of the new reservoir. from the dam on one side far back into the hills on the other. In spite of the tremendous downpour and the flerce gale Helen Illingworth stood exposed to both attacks, and, indeed, indifferent to them-albeit protected by slicker and boots and sou'wester-fascinated by the titanic struggle between nature and man of which she was a

The general investigation by Rodney and Miss Illingworth had produced



Helen Illingworth Stood Exposed Both Attacks.

no results. A careful study of Rodney's notes upon the subject had only served the more thoroughly to convince them that Meade was blameless. But the most assiduous effort with the heartlest will in the world and the promptings of devotion and affection could not make a case out of these suggestions and their inferences that would hold water. They could not establish their contention beyond peradventure in the face of Meade's direct admission and Shurtliff's corroboration. They could not establish it in the public mind by any evidence at all if Meade and Shurtliff remained silent.

If either one or the other of the two conspirators could be brought to tell the truth, Meade could be restored, at least sufficiently so for the purpose of Illingworth sooner or later must make gave the most thought, it was for that she planned and longed.

Two people cannot resolve, even by mutual consent to dismiss from their subject whatsoever without introducing in place of it a certain constraint. The men who had expended their It is as futile to attempt to dismiss mind as is the oft-suggested cure for to be cured!

> The next installment brings the climax of the story. The most important developments in the lives of Meade and his friends are described.

> > (TO BE CONTINUED.)

Old Stuff.

"A scientist can take one bone and reconstruct a dinosaur."

"That's nothing. Our landlady can take one bone and reconstruct a dinncr."-Louisville Courier-Journal.